

**Remarks by U.S. Government Representative
Gary Newton, USAID/Namibia Mission Director
World TB Day
Friday, 24 March 2006 9:00 – 11:00
Gobabis Showground, Omaheke Region, Namibia**

- Director of Ceremony, Dr. Kalumbi Shangula, Permanent Secretary MOHSS
- Honorable Minister of Health and Social Services, Richard Kamwi
- Honorable Governor of the Omaheke Region, Ms. Laura McLeod
- His Worship the Mayor of Gobabis, Mr. Katjaoha
- WHO Representative for Namibia, Dr. Custodia Mandlhate
- Country Representative from Oxfam Canada and other Development Partners
- Clinic Health Committee Members
- Distinguished invited guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honor to be here today in Gobabis in the Omaheke Region to join you all in observing World TB Day.

The common bond among us is that we all share the same vision – a world free of tuberculosis – and, we all share responsibility to make this vision a reality.

In Namibia, we are plagued with a severe dual epidemic of both tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS:

- Namibia has one of the world's worst HIV/AIDS epidemics [*prevalence in 2004 was just under 20%*]; and,
- Namibia has one of the world's highest rates of tuberculosis [*TB case notification rate in 2005 was 809/100,000*];
- and, many people suffer from dual infection.

HIV prevalence among TB patients is estimated to be 60%. TB can be deadly for anyone with a compromised immune system. TB is the number one cause of death for people living with HIV/AIDS.

For over half a century the world has known a cure for tuberculosis. Prompt treatment of TB is critical – and today it is possible. Treating TB is one of the most effective ways to improve and prolong the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS.

The United States Government has made a major commitment to tuberculosis treatment and control worldwide, and a major commitment to tuberculosis treatment and control in Namibia.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC), with funding from the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, and USAID, are supporting Namibia's integrated TB-HIV treatment and control program. For example, we have helped with:

- the development of your national TB plans and guidelines;
- the deployment of community counselors at health facilities all over the country to expand access to rapid testing;
- the training of health care workers in the integrated management of TB and HIV;
- the measurement of drug resistance;
- the provision of technical staff at the National TB Control Program; and
- resources for the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria to which the U.S. Government provides one-third of all funding worldwide.

Globally, USAID chairs the Coordinating Board of the *STOP TB Partnership*. The Partnership is a network of 400 organizations worldwide working to implement a new ten-year *Global Plan to Stop TB* (2006-2015). The partnership, headquartered at WHO, has set a goal of treating 50 million people and saving 14 million lives by 2015.

Under this partnership, priorities for USAID are to support country-level TB programs; to fund the *Global TB Drug Facility* which increases access to low-cost, high-quality anti-TB drugs; and to support the development of new TB drugs and diagnostics.

In Namibia, USAID will provide US\$2.0 million over two years [FY 2005-2006] to your National TB Control Program.

Namibia has made a great deal of progress in the fight against tuberculosis. We applaud your achievements to date and we stand by you as confront the next set of challenges, challenges such as:

- filling critical Health Program Administrator positions nationwide; and,
- reaching consensus on a payment scheme that is fair and sustainable for community volunteers working on DOTS [*Directly Observed Treatment – Short Course*].

Tuberculosis is a disease that devastates families and hinders economic growth. The WHO estimates that almost nine million people become ill with TB annually and almost two million die. Because TB is an airborne disease, no community is immune from its threat. However, unlike many health threats, TB is a problem that can be solved.

With the talent and commitment you have here in Namibia, and with a little help from your many friends, TB can be stopped, and the vision we share today, of a world free of tuberculosis, can become a reality.

Thank you.